

S. 1693, Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act of 2017

Legislation to Provide Criminal and Civil Remedies for Victims of Sex Trafficking

The Scourge of Online Sex Trafficking

Since 2007, the National Human Trafficking Hotline has received reports of 22,191 sex trafficking incidents. It is a growing problem because of the internet. Sex trafficking has moved from the street to the smart phone. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (known as NCMEC) reported an 846% increase in reports of suspected child sex trafficking from 2010 to 2015 – a spike the organization found to be “directly correlated to the increased use of the internet to sell children for sex.” The number of trafficking incidents reported is staggering, but understanding the stories of victims who have sought and been denied justice is the motivation behind this legislation.

For too long, courts around the country have ruled that websites like Backpage.com can continue to knowingly promote illegal sex trafficking online with no repercussions. In January 2017, after an 18-month investigation, the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (PSI) issued a stunning report which found that Backpage actively and knowingly facilitated the criminal sex trafficking of vulnerable women and young girls, and covered up evidence of these crimes all to increase its own profits.

Congress put in place criminal penalties to guard against sex trafficking in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. However, court rulings have made it clear that Congress must act to amend the Communications Decency Act to hold those who run sites that facilitate sex trafficking civilly and criminally accountable for their crimes. That’s what this bill does.

A Victim Focused and Carefully Crafted Solution

Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act was never intended to protect websites that facilitate sex trafficking. The Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act of 2017 would clarify Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act and ensure that websites that facilitate sex trafficking can be held liable and that victims can get justice. This carefully crafted legislation offers three reforms to help sex trafficking victims. The proposed legislation would:

- Allow sex trafficking victims to get the justice they deserve by eliminating federal liability protections for websites that assist, support, or facilitate online sex trafficking.
- Allow state and local law enforcement to prosecute websites that violate federal sex trafficking laws.

Bipartisan Senate Supporters: Portman, Blumenthal, McCain, McCaskill, Cornyn, Heitkamp, Blunt, Brown, Burr, Capito, Casey, Cassidy, Cochran, Collins, Corker, Cotton, Cruz, Duckworth, Durbin, Fischer, Flake, Graham, Hassan, Hoeven, Isakson, Kennedy, Klobuchar, Lankford, Lee, Murkowski, Nelson, Rubio, Sasse, Scott, Shaheen, Sullivan, and Tillis.

Endorsements Anti-Trafficking Advocates: National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Shared Hope Polaris Project, ECPAT-USA, Rights4Girls, World Without Exploitation, PROTECT, National Children's Alliance Trafficking in America Taskforce, Covenant House, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), Living Bread. Lynch Foundation for Children, Legal Momentum, Freegrace, Grace Farms Foundation, African American Juvenile Justice Project, DeliverFund, Survivors for Solutions, Fair Girls, Courtney's House ***Public Health:*** National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners ***Faith Community:*** Faith & Freedom Coalition, Family Research Council, Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, Concerned Women for America, Focus on the Family, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, The Catholic Association, Friends Committee on National Legislation, United Methodist Church ***Civil Rights:*** National Urban League ***Law Enforcement:*** National District Attorneys Association, Major County Sheriffs of America, Fraternal Order of Police, National Association of Police Organizations, Major Cities Chiefs and Police Organizations ***Industry:*** Oracle, 21st Century Fox, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, IBM, Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), CoStar Group, The American Hotel and Lodging Association, The Walt Disney Company.